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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KWBG KPAL KJUS IS

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY OFFICIALS ON
SETTLER VIOLENCE, JUSTICE SECTOR

REF: A. JERUSALEM 2271

1B. JERUSALEM 2292

1C. JERUSALEM 2260

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: In recent meetings, senior Palestinian Authority (PA) security officials stressed the need to prevent settler violence from provoking a Palestinian response. They noted the difficulty of preventing and containing settler-related violence in flashpoints outside PA security control (that is, Areas B and C of the West Bank). Minister of Interior Said Abu Ali outlined his rule of law and justice sector reform priorities as follows: (1) construction of additional rehabilitation and correctional facilities, including prisons; (2) building a judicial police force; (3) establishment of forensic labs; and (4) increased cooperation with regional and international organizations in the area of drugs and organized crime. End Summary.

NSF WEST BANK COMMANDER ON SETTLER VIOLENCE

12. (C) In a December 12 meeting, National Security Force (NSF) West Bank Commander Thiab Muhammad Mustafa Ali al-Hamduni (aka Abu al-Fatah) echoed concerns expressed by his fellow PA security chiefs (Refs A and B) about settler-Palestinian violence related to the GOI's ten-month moratorium on new residential construction in the West Bank. "This is the most serious challenge we face as Palestinians," he said. Palestinians felt "individually targeted" by settler violence, which is "inflaming a dangerous religious war," he said. Because settlers have Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reservists among them, "they're trained, and well-armed," he said.

13. (C) Abu Al-Fatah continued, "there are Israeli elements in the settler community trying to incite the Palestinian people... we are working to prevent this. Our plan is to communicate with the people to calm them down." Note: On December 14, the NSF provided a security escort for the visit of Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger to the mosque of Yasuf village, target of a December 11 arson attack blamed on Israeli settlers (Ref C). End Note.

14. (C) Abu al-Fatah noted that settler violence was particularly problematic when it occurred in Areas B and C of the West Bank, in which Israel retains security control, and PA security forces are forbidden to enter without proper coordination. "When violence happens outside the PA's jurisdiction," he said, "it becomes the responsibility of the Israeli forces. They are often not present to prevent (violence), but instead show up after the fact." He said the PA would ask IDF leadership for permission to deploy PA security forces to more areas. "We are looking at Area C flashpoints near settlements, such as those in Nablus,

Hebron, and Tulkarm," he said.

PA MINISTER OF INTERIOR ON CONTAINING UNREST, JUSTICE SECTOR

¶5. (C) In a separate November 16 meeting, PA Minister of Interior Said Abu Ali stressed the importance of Palestinians remaining above the fray, despite settler provocations. "If confronted with a greater force," he said, "even avoiding a war is a victory." While it was "hard to tell people not to defend themselves," it was also "important that you do not throw yourself into the fire." Recalling the first and second Intifadas, he said, "we paid a very high price." Now, Palestinians believe their strength lies "in moral superiority, not in weapons." Therefore, Abu Ali said, he saw his mission as protecting Palestinians by keeping them from being drawn into conflict with settlers.

¶6. (C) Abu Ali noted the inherent interconnections between security sector and justice sector reform. He outlined his priorities in the following order: (1) construction of increased rehabilitation and correctional facilities, including prisons; (2) building a judicial police force "from scratch"; (3) forensic labs (he said his Ministry is working with Canada on this, and that any criminal labs set up would be connected to the Civil Police and the Ministry of Interior); and (4) increased cooperation with regional and international organizations in the area of drugs and organized crime.

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